

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 24

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT  
2 September 1985



U.S. Embassy in Moscow is target of "spy powder" ploy.

## KGB Dust: A Hazard for U.S. Diplomats

### MOSCOW

It sparked a cancer scare for Americans in Moscow, sent chemists to their reference books and cast a shadow over U.S.-Soviet relations.

But Soviet use of the invisible chemical tracing agent NPPD here in the Soviet capital may achieve exactly what was intended: Discourage Soviet dissidents and intelligence sources from meeting American diplomats.

**Chemical "fingerprint."** U.S. officials charged on August 21 that the Soviet KGB had dusted doorknobs, auto steering wheels and other surfaces in U.S. establishments in Moscow to contaminate Americans with an indelible chemical "fingerprint" that would leave traces on the hands, clothing or dwelling furnishings of anyone with whom Americans made contact. By detecting the chemical, KGB agents could track Russians cooperating with the West.

**"If the report is true,"** said ex-CIA official David Phillips, "it will make one of the most difficult intelligence jobs even more difficult—U.S. intelligence officers meeting with Soviet agents inside the Soviet Union."

Preliminary results from U.S. tests prompted the State Department to notify some 500 Americans of the risk from nitrophenylpentadien, known to cause genetic damage and to be potentially cancerous.

"Can you give me some advice?" asked Jane Thatcher at one of the U.S. Embassy briefings for Americans. "Should I keep my kid away from the car? How protective should I be?"

Actually, no ill effects have been detected among those exposed, specialists said. State Department medical expert Dr. Charles E. Brodine, flown in to brief Americans, said: "I have greater concern about people who drive without seat belts or who are heavy smokers."

Americans were advised to wash with soap and water and an alcohol-based compound but were not told who might have been contaminated, or where. "All I can tell you is there is no doubt that the KGB is using this substance," explained Chargé d'Affaires Richard Combs. "I can't go beyond that."

Anger was expressed more openly in Washington. "If they're going to put chemicals over there on our people, subject them to cancer," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond, "then we close the embassy entirely if necessary." Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), deputy chairman of the Intelligence Committee, called on the President to retaliate by expelling Soviet intelligence agents "masquerading as Russian diplomats."

The episode recalled a similar incident in 1976 when the U.S. charged that the KGB was endangering the health of American diplomats in Moscow by bombarding the U.S. Embassy with microwave radiation. Intelligence experts suspected that the microwave stream was intended to activate latent eavesdropping devices or to pick up conversations.

By NICHOLAS DANILOFF